

THE

HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

June 2011

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, June 16, 2011, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Guest speaker for the program will be Tim Keller, Hancock County Chancery Clerk. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call **by noon on Wednesday, June 15**, to make your reservation, to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-eight people, and to apprise us of the number for whom to prepare. The price of the lunch is \$10.00.

ANNUAL CEMETERY TOUR

Even though October is still several months away, it's not too early to begin thinking about and planning the Hancock County Historical Society Annual Cemetery Tour. It will be held on Halloween night, Monday, **October 31, 2011**, at Cedar Rest Cemetery on Second Street. We will need volunteers to help prepare the cemetery for the tour (mark the path, etc.), to portray citizens buried there, to act as guides, and to serve at the Lobrano House. To volunteer, please call the Society at 467-4090.



James K. Vardaman
(1861—1930)

Although he was a native of Jackson County, Texas, James K. Vardaman was reared in Yalobusha County, Mississippi and was the thirty-sixth governor of Mississippi serving from 1904—1908. He also served as a U. S. Senator from Mississippi from 1913—1919. After losing re-election to the Senate in 1918 and 1922, he moved from Mississippi to Alabama where he lived until his death.

The Louisiana-Mississippi War of 1905

By
Edith Back
(reprinted from the August 1998
Historian)
Edited by
Eddie Coleman

In the 1890's the South endured annual plagues of yellow fever, borne by mosquitoes. Even though the Army Yellow Fever Commission headed by Major Walter Reed confirmed in 1901 the hypothesis of Cuban

scientist Dr. Carlos Juan Finlay that yellow fever was caused by a mosquito, most of the South ignored its implications. Mosquito control was difficult and expensive, especially in the marshy coast lands. Another deterrent to control was the proliferation of cisterns and stagnant pools which provided the insect with a perfect breeding ground.

Yellow fever was reported as early as May 1905 in New Orleans. But the news didn't reach Mississippi until July 22 when Dr. John F. Hunter, Secretary of the Mississippi State Board of

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MISSION STATEMENT

"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

Health, announced that he had learned from "a private source" of its existence. Once confirmed, Dr. Hunter ordered a state quarantine against the City of New Orleans. Authorities in Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas charged that the Louisiana State Board of Health had been reluctant to announce the presence of the fever, and these states established quarantines to protect their citizens. Louisiana felt that these reactions were extreme, and Edward Sanchon, president of the Louisiana State Board of Health and Quitman Kohnke, City of New Orleans Health Officer, announced that the two deaths cited could not be attributed to the fever until autopsies were conducted.

On July 22, 1905, Dr. Sanchon released information of a man who had developed yellow fever near St. Philip Street. Kohnke announced preventive measures for citizens to take during the summer: eliminate all stagnant water; put a teacup of "insurance oil" on the surface of cistern water, on cesspools, and on privy vaults; put mosquito nets on beds; and install screens on doors and windows.

While Texas and Alabama declared interstate quarantines and Louisiana communities adopted intrastate quarantines against New Orleans, it was the Mississippi quarantine that caused particular concern to New Orleanians since many of them sent their families to the Mississippi Gulf Coast for the summer. Within two days the Coast's hotels and cottages were empty.

The Jackson *Clarion*

Ledger reported on July 25, 1905, that Pass Christian, Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, and others around the Coast complained that the quarantine was discriminatory. It reported further that Coast citizens "have almost threatened to secede from the state if the Health Board does not permit citizens of New Orleans to visit their families in Coast towns." Ultimately their appeal was denied.

Louisiana governor Newton C. Blanchard held a conference attended by representatives from Louisiana, New Orleans, Texas, Tennessee, and the U. S. Public Health and Marine Hospital Service. The consensus was that the epidemic had slowed and that mosquito control measures had been adopted.

Despite the prevention campaign underway, in Mississippi the quarantine was in place, detention camps were under construction, and state and federal agencies were cooperating. New Orleans settled in for the siege, expected to be brief.

On July 26, 1905, Mississippi Governor James K. Vardaman fired the opening salvo that would most severely damage the cordial relations between the sister states and eventually escalate into the "War of the Waters."

"Epidemics are usually resultant of placing commercial interests above the public health, and in the effort to suppress the truth, the disease gets a foothold and ere it is known, the whole community is infected with it," Vardaman said.

Under Adjutant General Arthur Fridge, Mississippi mili-

tary personnel were sent to the Gulf Coast and Louisiana borders with orders to maintain the quarantine "at the point of a bayonet." Thus began the "shotgun quarantine." S. G. Thigpen recalled that when Justice John Seal started to Bay Springs with a prisoner he was given ten minutes by a quarantine guard to turn around or he and his prisoner would be shot.

While the governors of Louisiana and Mississippi were exchanging recriminations, Surgeon Eugene Wasdin of the U. S. Public Health and Marine Hospital Service had been placed in charge of the maritime quarantine along the Gulf, using the US revenue cutter *Winona* to assist Mississippi authorities in preventing the landing of vessels from New Orleans and sending quarantine violators to Ship Island for detention and fumigation.

Mississippi quarantine boats lay at anchor in the Rigolets to waylay outbound schooners. The powerboat *Grace* and a boat from the Biloxi oyster fleet had detained 118 vessels until the *Winona* arrived to tow them to Ship Island. One schooner even entered Lake Borgne, in Louisiana territory, with enough "arrogant usurpation of authority than [sic] would make even a pirate blink," said the *Daily Picayune*. While Louisiana and federal authorities ordered an investigation, some St. Bernard Parish residents were recommending outfitting a tug with cannon and firing at any vessel entering Louisiana waters. Meanwhile, numerous Mississippi citizens went to Jackson to

volunteer to fight.

Governor Blanchard ordered armed vessels to Lake Borgne, Chef Menteur, the Rigolets, and the mouth of the Pearl River. "It is not my purpose to make an offensive movement against Mississippi," he said. But the purpose is "to protect rights of Louisiana fishermen and boatmen who have been harassed, annoyed, and assailed by Mississippi quarantine guards."

The *Daily Picayune* favored asking the federal government to "call off the sea dogs and give Louisiana oystermen a chance to earn a living....Louisiana could tackle the Mississippi navy, but when the grim smuggler-hunters of the U. S. bear down upon our oyster squadrons, they must haul down their colors and surrender."

What especially angered the Louisiana fishermen was that armed soldiers had crossed the Pearl River and were hanging around in Louisiana territory. This "armed invasion" of Mississippians thereby violated the Constitution of the United States which forbade an armed force of one state from entering another without first securing permission.

While the conflict raged, yellow fever spread. On August 4, 1905, a conference of leading citizens resolved to ask the federal government to take control. Governor Brandon and New Orleans Mayor Martin Behrman wired President Theodore Roosevelt asking for assistance. Many citizens expressed concern about the threat of federal invasion on states' rights.

The Louisiana-Mississippi Quarantine War of 1905 ended in recriminations, criticism, and convoluted explanations of who was to blame; in addition, it ended in a defense of state sovereignty. Federal authority had placed itself between the two combatants, and an armistice reigned.

There were no battle casualties in the War of the Waters. But the 1905 yellow fever epidemic, the last the South experienced, left 870 cases with 70 deaths in Mississippi and 9,321 cases with 988 deaths in Louisiana.

SOURCE:

Legan, Marshall Scott. "The War of the Waters: The Louisiana-Mississippi Quarantine War of 1905." *The Journal of Mississippi History*, 50 (1988): 89—110.

Did You Know This about Hancock County?

By
Scott Bagley

Did you know that, while Napoleon Bonaparte never set foot in Hancock County, there are some people who believe that one of his brothers did and that such a visit led to the naming of a small community on the Pearl River?

Legend has it that a brother of Napoleon Bonaparte—either Jerome or Joseph depending on who tells the tale—once camped on the banks of the Pearl River as part of a secret scheme to free his brother from prison on Saint Helena.

After his surrender and banishment in 1814, a number of plots were afoot to rescue Napoleon. One called for moving him to New Orleans where locals were building a house at 500 Chartres Street, still known today as the Napoleon House. Napoleon urged his British captors to free him, offering to go to the United States, but the British refused. The alternative was escape.

His brother Joseph (the more likely choice of the two brothers as there appears to be some support validating a visit by him to the United States) and a cadre of supporters left the coast of France on a cargo ship. In Joseph's possession was supposedly eighty thousand dollars in gold to finance Napoleon's escape. Warned by friends to avoid the Gulf of Mexico, the Rigolets, Lake Pontchartrain—indeed all the waters in the area—because of infestation by pirates, the group hid by day and traveled by night. They made their way to the area of present-day Waveland, where they were met by Jeremiah Henley, a French supporter who had aided France in its colonial disputes with Spain and also served in Napoleon's army, surviving the Russian campaign.

Henley met Joseph's group with mules and supplies for a trip to a prepared hiding place on the banks of the Pearl River. They reached their hideout in a thicket some one thousand feet east of the river. When a mule brayed, it was killed and buried lest suspicious pirates lurking in the area hear it.

True to many coastal legends, this one also has buried

treasure. Joseph, realizing that a large sum of money could tempt members of his retinue, slipped away from them one night and buried his gold. Whether the treasure was ever retrieved remains an unknown part of the legend.

Departing their hideout on a dark night and evading pirate ships in fog and heavy rain, Joseph's group left in a rowboat. Upon arriving in New Orleans, Joseph found no enthusiasm for sheltering his famous (or infamous) brother, so he gave up his plan and returned to France.

His brother Napoleon died in 1821 at age fifty-two, never having visited America...at least according to this legend.

(This article is basically a rewrite of an article that appeared in *The Historian* in June of 1996, written by its then editor, Edith Back. Ms. Back's sources for her article included the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1959 ed.; *Napoleon Community Took Emperor's Brother's Name* by S. G. Thigpen, Sr.; "South Mississippi in 1852: Some Selections from the Journal of Benjamin L. C. Wailes," *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. XVIII, January 1956.)

Interesting Facts about Hancock County

If you know some interesting and not widely known items or stories about Hancock County, please consider sharing them with the Historical Society for possible inclusion in *The Historian*. While documented facts and stories are preferred, as can be seen by the above article, legends will be considered for publication if at least one secondary source can be produced. If your item or story is selected for publication (and the selection process is completely arbitrary),

you will not only be recognized prominently in this publication, but the author of this series will buy your lunch at an upcoming monthly Historical Society meeting! You may submit your item by calling the Society at 467-4090, mailing it to P. O. Box 3356, Bay St. Louis, MS 39521, or sending it by e mail to hancockcountyhis@bellsouth.net.

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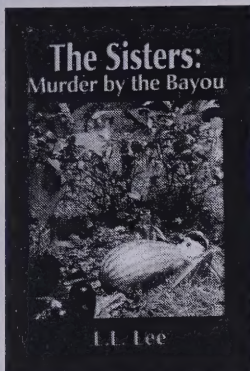
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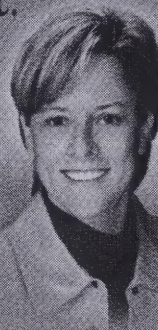
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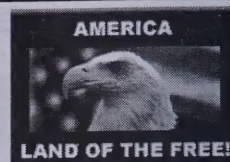
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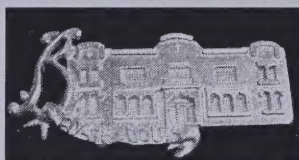
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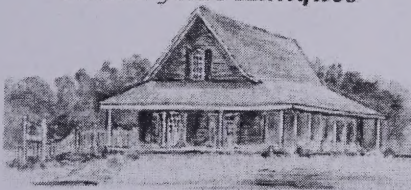
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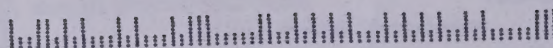
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